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ABSTRACT

The University of Northern Colorado Teacher Induction Partnerships program is designed to accomplish the transition from beginning or re-entry teacher to experienced professional in a smooth and effective fashion. The program provides a reality-based educational experience designed to assist beginning and re-entry teachers in developing and expanding their professional skills during the induction year. Program participants teach full time and attend monthly seminars, and earn a monthly stipend and graduate credits. The program provides professional course work along with field consultation and supervision. Participating school districts provide the context for the field experience utilizing a mentor/protege model. This program description examines the university and public school partnership, funding, program staff, partner teacher and mentor roles, retention, program development, and evaluation. (10 references) (JDD)

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PART A

AASCU/ERIC MODEL PROGRAMS

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AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory is a two-year project seeking to establish and test a model system for collecting and disseminating information on model programs at AASCU-member institutions--375 of the public four-year colleges and universities in the United States.

The four objectives of the project are:

- To increase the information on model programs available to all institutions through the ERIC system
- To encourage the use of the ERIC system by AASCU institutions
- To improve AASCU's ability to know about, and share information on, activities at member institutions, and
- To test a model for collaboration with ERIC that other national organizations might adopt.

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project is funded with a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, in collaboration with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education at The George Washington University.

PROGRAM ABSTRACT

In keeping with the current trend toward 5th-year induction programs, and recognizing the many changes in education for people re-entering the teaching profession, the University of Northern Colorado Teacher Induction Partnerships provides a reality-based educational experience designed to assist beginning and re-entry teachers in developing and expanding their professional skills during the induction year. Through Teacher Induction Partnerships, the University of Northern Colorado and participating school districts provide on -site training and clinical experiences. The program provides professional course work along with field consultation and supervision. The participating school district provides the context for the field experience utilizing a Mentor/Protégé model.

Partner Teachers earn 10 semester hours of graduate credit applicable to a Masters degree by teaching full time and attending monthly seminars. The number of graduate credit hours that apply toward a specific master's degree is at the discretion of each academic department. Partner Teachers receive a monthly stipend paid throughout the induction year.

Teacher Induction Partnerships affords the opportunity whereby the transition from beginning or re-entry teacher to experienced professional can be accomplished smoothly and effectively. This reality-based experience brings theory and practice into focus and bridges the gap between university training and experiential competence.

INTRODUCTION

Recent literature on induction have attempted to review the broad spectrum of design and implementation of programs nationally (Rauth and Bowers, 1986). This attempt to corral the variety of practices and philosophies has produced a laundry list of purposes of an induction program. Providing support heads the list with a number of variations (system information, resources/ materials, instructional techniques, emotional support, classroom management, environment, demonstration teaching) (Odell, 1986). Hegler and Dudley summarized the work of Huling-Austin (1986), Johnston (1985), Odell (1986) and Fox and Singletary (1986) for a broador list of purposes including improvement of teacher performance, increased teacher retention rates, greater personal and professional well-being of the beginning teacher, increased knowledge and skills, satisfaction of induction related requirements for certification, illumination of issues, development of attitudes related to effective teaching, and orientation of the new teacher and sharing of cultures. Varah, Theune and Parker (1986) took the purpose of induction to an even higher level when they charged that a program should raise competency levels of participants distinctly above that of the beginning teacher and develop an individual teaching style based on observation, discussion and consultation. Odell (1987) capsulized the purpose of the structured induction program when she stated that it is to offer interventions that will deal with the "collapse of the ideals they formed about teaching during teacher training" (p. 70). The Holmes Group (1986), the Carnegie Forum (1986) and NCATE (cited in Association of Teacher Educators, 1986) all promote some form of induction years or residencies.

What follows is a description of the Teacher Induction Partnerships (TIP) program at the University of Northern Colorado. Included in the description will be an overview of the university and public school partnership, funding source, program staff, partner teacher and mentor roles, retention information, program development and evaluation.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The University of Northern Colorado's Teacher Induction Partnerships program was originated in 1973 under UNC's College of Education. The program was designed to address alarming dropout rates of teachers nationally, provide a framework for beginning teachers to enter the profession successfully, and foster interaction between the University and Colorado school districts. More recently, the program has been used by districts in conjunction with site-based management models. In addition, the program has three extended collaborative facets. First, the program is incorporated into several district T.O.S.A. (Teacher on Special Assignment) projects, each with unique features. Second, program Partner Teachers are used to facilitate a university/district teacher exchange for a National Science Foundation grant. Third, the program is an integral component of a Professional Renewal Program sponsored by UNC's Teacher Education Center.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Since its inception, the program has provided districts with approximately 700 Partner Teacher placements. Program components, organizational design and curriculum content are based upon current research identifying needs of teachers in the first year of the profession. The program is not related to licensure and currently no centralized state format or expectation exists. The program model includes: 1) orientations for mentors, principals and partner teachers; 2) graduate seminars; 3) a three person support team for each partner teacher; 4) legal contracts between all parties stipulating roles and responsibilities; 5) graduate courses for mentors; 6) full-time university staff who conduct regular classroom observations and instruct seminars; 7) release time for partner teachers to observe other teachers, attend conferences, etc. During the induction year the program's emphasis is on creating a safe context for personal and professional growth, experimentation, and reflection.

University/Public School Partnership

UNC's Teacher Education Center forms partnerships with public schools that provide a year-long teaching assignment for partner teachers. Districts range in student population size from 1,000 to 27,000. Regardless of district size, certain key individuals play significant roles in the induction program. Each district has a representative contact person who is responsible for negotiating legal contracts and monitoring the quality of placement sites within each district. Generally, this person is a central office administrator. Once in a district, the support team for the beginning teacher consists of three individuals. The first is the building principal who treats the partner teacher as he or she would any beginning teacher in the building. The second is a mentor teacher. This individual is selected by the principal and is considered to be a master teacher. The mentor is available to be of assistance to the partner teacher daily. Criteria for selecting mentor teachers is based on current research on mentor/protege matches. For example, most mentors share a common planning period or are teaching within the same physical proximity and at the same age and subject level as their beginning teacher. The third is the university consultant who maintains a regular schedule of classroom observations and conferences.

Currently, 61 public schools from 9 districts participate in the program. A total of 93 partner teachers are placed and 91 mentors are involved in the program. As part of our partnership with public schools, not only is there shared authority in the selection and accountability of partner teachers and mentor teachers, there are also special events, planned and implemented jointly by the University of Northern Colorado and school districts.

Funding

The program does not receive FTE monies from the university, nor does it receive state funding. The program is funded solely by monies from public schools. That money pays each partner teacher a stipend, the tuition for ten semester hours of graduate credit, and all salaries and operational costs of the program.

Staff

The Teacher Induction Partnerships program currently consists of seven field consultants, one coordinator, and a director. In addition to classroom observations and conferences with partner teachers, mentors and principals, field consultants act as the caretakers and facilitators of the support team. They are responsible to facilitate sustained support through one-on-one training with mentors, airing of concerns, and open communication between all parties. Staff members are trained in clinical supervision, reflection, observation and data collection techniques, stages of teacher development, growth models and appropriate intervention methods. Staff members are assigned districts by geographic location.

Partner Teacher Candidates

Screening, selection, demographic information.

The program draws predominantly from two candidate populations. The first is the beginning teacher who is embarking upon a first full-time instructional position. The second is the re-entry individual. This is the non-traditional student who may have been in education some years ago and has stepped away from the profession and is seeking re-entry support into a system they perceive as having changed significantly. The vast majority of teacher candidates are female, white, and of upper academic ability. Most partner teacher placements are at the elementary level. The age of partner teachers ranges from early twenties to early fifties.

There are approximately 600 requests made for applications each year of which about 200 candidates are interviewed for placement. Requirements for acceptance are a current Colorado teacher certificate, minimum GPA of 2.75, acceptance into the UNC Graduate School, and satisfactory completion of both paper and verbal screening procedures. Partner Teachers are interviewed by university staff, school district administrative personnel and building principals and teachers. The final selection of a candidate in the placement process is made by building principals and teachers. Partner teacher candidates are recruited from the undergraduate preparation program at UNC as well as other state institutions.

Academic Development

Partner teachers obtain 10 semester hours of graduate credit through satisfactory teaching performance and participation in a monthly graduate seminar. Topics for the seminars are selected and sequenced according to the current research on the needs of beginning teachers. Seminars are taught by university field consultants at district locations. School district staff are often invited to co-teach seminars with the university field consultant. An optional seminar on job seeking skills is presented at the conclusion of the induction year.

In addition to readings and assignments, partner teachers are required to complete either a professional portfolio or classroom research project for presentation at an end-of-the-year conference. Each partner teacher completes a Professional Development Plan outlining his or her goals and objectives for the year. In addition to coursework, partner teachers are video and audiotaped.

Mentor Component

Mentors in the program are full-time teachers selected and employed by school districts. The legal contract between UNC and partner districts stipulates that the mentor teacher must have: (a) the willingness to work with a partner teacher, (b) sufficient time available to cooperate with district and program personnel in planning and implementing an acceptable induction experience for the partner teacher in incorporating classroom teaching and professional growth, and, (c) at least two years of satisfactory professional experience in the profession. The university program offers a course in mentoring which includes teacher development, relationship and rapport building, observation and conferencing techniques, communication skills and mentoring models and components. Many districts offer in-house training courses on mentoring. One district requires mentors to have documented evidence of formal training in supervisory skills. This same district began remunerating their mentors a $1,000.00 stipend fall of 1990.

The mentoring component is based on the notion that assistance is more effective than assessment. Mentors, therefore, do not engage in evaluative processes. They are provided orientation materials and suggested activities for mentoring. Each mentor/partner teacher pair create a working plan for the year. While mentors are encouraged to make classroom observations, the nature of interaction between most mentor/partner teacher pairs is informal. Mentors share materials, act as a sounding board for ideas and concerns, accelerate the socialization process to the school and community and facilitate relationships between the partner teacher and staff, parents, and students.

Retention

Follow-up surveys of past partner teachers reveal that 85% of the 1987-88 partner teachers were teaching the year after their experience with the Teacher Induction Partnerships Program. Fifty-six of the 68 1988-89 partner teachers were contacted. Of the 56, 84% are still teaching.

Program Development

The program currently enjoys an outstanding reputation within the state and continues to expand in number of participants, quality of services, and academic depth. Program staff are currently exploring the possibility of creating a menu of academic programs to accompany the current field based experience and compliment the monthly seminar. One option under consideration is the culmination of the program in a two-year masters degree. The program continues to expand mentor training opportunities by collaborating with staff development efforts of districts as well as increasing the course offerings from the university.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Evaluative material from 1988-90 program participants revealed the following:

- - Partner Teachers felt the university consultant was more effective than the mentor or principal.
- - Mentors and principals rated the university consultant higher than themselves.
- - Partner Teachers felt there could be greater awareness of induction at the placement site.
- - Self-confidence, knowledge of current trends and development in classroom management were areas of greatest growth.
- - Mentors felt that not only did they have an impact on the Partner Teacher, but their teaching also improved as a result of mentoring.

CONCLUSIONS

The most difficult task for the UNC program remains one of merging different perceptions about the nature and value of the induction process among all participants and creating a shared and operational knowledge base among the approximately 250 partner teachers, mentors, principals, and district administrators involved annually. Quality control issues become paramount in terms of creating uniformity in selection and monitoring of placement sites, solid mentor/partner teacher matches, and policy and role descriptions. To conclude, an induction program grounded in a university/school district context of collaboration is much more than a vehicle to address the needs of the beginning teacher. It is a catalyst for change fostered through relationships designed and facilitated by committed individuals. The identity, philosophy, and design continues to be influenced by local needs and expectations of emerging teachers as well as national concerns and awareness about induction. The UNC model currently provides equal ownership and responsibility of the induction process to the university and public schools.

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